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ABSTRACT

Students' reasons for applying for admission to the University of North Dakota for the academic year 1979-80 were studied. Information was obtained from a question appearing on the admission application form completed by all new freshmen and college transfer students. Results revealed that students cited reasons related to academic program 40.2 percent of the time, followed by location (25.5 percent), and school's reputation (13 percent). Further analysis revealed that age appeared to account for most of the differences. Students 25 years or older were more likely to give location as a reason than were students 19 and younger, or students aged 20-24. These groups generally stated a reason related to an academic program. Variations in stated reasons were evident between new freshmen and transfer students, military veterans and non-veterans, and between students maintaining continous enrollment and those who had last attended school more than six months ago. However, since each of these variables consisted of categories that reflected age differences between groups, the findings were probably more symptomatic of the age differential than of true differences between groups. Differences between findings of this study and those of the American Council on Education are noted. (SW)

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REASONS FOR SELECTING THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA BY NEW FRESHMEN AND COLLEGE TRANSFER STUDENTS 1979-80

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RB-SA-041580

Enrollment Services

HE 013 038

AUG 2 5 1980

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INTRODUCTION

A concern long voiced by college recruiters and admissions officers has been "Why do high school students choose to attend one college and not another?" During the 1980's and 1990's this question will become even more critical due to the projected decline in the number of traditional college age students. In conjunction with fewer potential students, one may find increased competition in college recruiting. This, coupled with increased costs of operations, the energy crisis, and the spectre of retrenchment, clearly reveals the need for improved information concerning students' selection of a college. If colleges are to assist prospective students fully in the decision making process, it is imperative to know students' informational needs, as well as the most effective means for meeting those needs.

Though this concern has gained added importance in the past few years, it is not a new area of investigation. The University of North Dakota has for a number of years cooperated with the Cooperative Institutional Research Program of the American Council on Education's "Continuing Study of Higher Education." This survey is completed by new freshmen and transfer students during summer pre-registration. One item asks students to respond to a listing of 12 reasons for selecting an institution, by indicating whether it is a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason in their decision to enroll. The results (See Appendix A) for UND students completing the survey during the summer of 1979 reveal that "a good academic reputation" was selected as being "very important" by 51.8% of the new freshmen and 54.5% of the transfer students. This was followed by "special education program" with 29.2% and 27.8%, respectively.

No other reason was rated as being "very important" by more than 15% of either group.

The primary rationale for this study was to determine whether students would indicate a different reason in response to the open-ended question "Why did you select the University of North Dakota?" This question appears on the "Application For Admission" form completed by all new freshmen and college transfer students. Since students may be more likely to reveal their true motivation on an open-ended type of question (rather than on the rating format used by ACE) the compilation of these responses may provide a better picture of why students decide to attend the University of North Dakota.

METHOD

The data for this study were collected from completed UND Application For Admission forms housed in the Admissions Office. This data base consisted of all new students, transfer students, and graduate students applying for admission for the 1979-80 academic year. Graduate students were excluded from the study because their application form was not comparable to those used by new and transfer students.

Information from a student's record was key-coded and entered on FORTRAN coding forms to facilitate the key-punching process. The independent variables were classificatory in nature (sex, age, etc.) and the dependent variable (reason for selecting UND) was open-ended (See Appendix B). Responses to the latter were coded from a key developed by expanding ACE categories for college selection (See Appendix C). These categories were expanded to include as many similar responses as possible and to facilitate ease of coding. During data analysis, these categories were then collapsed to enable direct comparisons with the previously collected

ACE data. All responses not readily classifiable were coded "0 - Other" and recorded verbatim. For a representative sample of these responses, see Appendix D. Those respondents listing multiple reasons were categorized according to the first response listed.

A small number of files did not contain an Application For Admission form and therefore were not included in the analysis. These were primarily foreign student's files and thus were not of major interest for this study.

Data collection was completed during the months of October and November 1979, prior to the time that files from the Admissions Office were merged with those in the Registrar's Office. As a consequence of this merger, information from 142 new freshmen and 82 transfer students who had applied for admission but did not subsequently enroll were included in the data collection and analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics

The results of the study were based on a total of 2,434 validly recorded cases out of a total population of 2,789 new freshmen and transfer students who had applied for admission. Due to missing data and rounding errors, not all percentages reported total 100%.

The sample consisted of 1,264 (51.9%) males and 1,167 (47.9%) females. Of these students, 1,325 (62.6%) were 19 years of age or less; 596 (28.2%) were between 20 and 24 years old; and 194 (9.2%) were 25 years or older. The overwhelming majority, 2,336 (96.0%) stated they planned to enter UND in the Fall semester.

Based on the state in which they reported having attended high school, 1,407 (57.8%) were from North Dakota; 640 (26.3%) were from

Minnesota; and 374 (15.4%) were from other states. A total of 1,436 (59.1%) were new freshmen, while 998 (40.9%) were transfer students. Of the transfer students, 432 (43.3%) transferred from a North Dakota college; 298 (29.9%) were from a Minnesota college; and 268 (26.9%) from another state.

The smallest categories consisted of 108 (4.4%) military veterans and 34 (1.4%) students with a physical handicap.

Reasons For Attending

The following Table illustrates the stated reasons for attending UND for all groups combined.

TABLE I

Reasons Given For Selecting UND By New Freshmen And Transfer Students Applying For Admission During The School Year 1979-80

Reasons	N	Frequency	Adjusted Frequency
Location	540	22.2%	25.5%
Academic Program	852	35.0%	40.2%
Reputation (academic, athletics, art, etc.)	316	13.0%	14.9%
Advice of relative, counselor, friends, etc.	162	6.7%	7.6%
Size	20	0.8%	0.9%
Financial Considerations (scholarships, low cost, etc.)	29	1.2%	1.4%
Other Unclassified	202	8.3%	9.5%
No Reason Given	313	12.9%	------
TOTAL	2434	100.1%	100.0%

313 (12.9%) students did not state a reason for selection on their applications and consequently were excluded from further analysis. All subsequent percentages were based only on those students who stated a reason. This modification was reflected in the adjusted frequency column of the tables.

The first three categories--location, academic program, and reputation--accounted for 80.5% of the total stated reasons with academic program alone accounting for 40.2% of the total. Taken individually, the other categories account for a relatively small proportion of the total reasons.

Analyzing the breakdown of the reasons for attendance by specific groups, however, revealed some interesting differences. These groups are dealt with separately below.

Age

The classification of students by age groups had a much greater effect on the stated reason than any other variable considered.

TABLE 2

Reasons Given For Selecting UND By Age For New Freshmen And Transfer Students

Reasons	19 years old or less	20 to 24 years old	25 years old or more
Location	352(26.6%)	104(17.4%)	84(43.3%)
Academic Program	512(38.6%)	276(46.3%)	61(31.4%)
Reputation	223(16.8%)	80(13.4%)	12(6.2%)
Advice	102(7.7%)	51(8.6%)	8(4.1%)
Size	10(0.8%)	9(1.5%)	1(0.5%)
Financial Considerations	17(1.3%)	11(1.8%)	1(0.5%)
Other Unclassified	109(8.2%)	65(10.9%)	27(13.9%)
TOTAL	1325(100.0%)	596(99.9%)	194(99.9%)

While only 17.4% of students 20-24 and 26.6% of those 19 or under gave "location" as a reason, 43.3% of those 25 or older did so. These differences may be accounted for by the possibility students older-than-average have family and work commitments tying them to the Grand Forks area and restricting their educational mobility. Many of the younger students may be leaving home for the first time and be unwilling to select a college located too far from home--also, a geographic restriction. This analysis assumes that those students who stated "location" as a reason did so because of the proximity of their residence to the institution. This may not be true in all situations.

For those students in the age group 20-24, "academic program" was cited most often (46.3%), compared to 38.6% of those 19 or less and 31.4% of those 25 or older. Thus it appears that students in their early 20's based their decision to attend UND on their interest in an academic program rather than on geographical considerations.

"Reputation" was cited as a reason considerably more often (16.8%) by the youngest group than by those 25 or older (6.2%). One explanation for this could be that younger students have fewer personal experiences to draw from than older students in making a decision of this kind and thus may be more likely to rely on an institution's reputation.

Sex

Relatively minor variations were evident in the reasons expressed by males and females. None of these resulted in differences greater than 5%.

State Of High School Attended

Reasons by "state of high school attended" also revealed relatively minor differences.

TABLE 3

Reasons Given For Selecting UND By State Of High School Attended For New Freshmen And Transfer Students

	STATE OF HIGH SCHOOL		
Reasons	North Dakota	Minnesota	Other
Location	330(27.3%)	133(22.9%)	76(23.6%)
Academic Program	445(36.8%)	273(47.1%)	134(41.6%)
Reputation	197(16.3%)	74(12.8%)	40(12.4%)
Advice	97(8.0%)	39(6.7%)	25(7.8%)
Size	8(0.7%)	11(1.9%)	0(0.0%)
Financial Considerations	15(1.2%)	10(1.7%)	4(1.2%)
Other Unclassified	117(9.7%)	40(6.9%)	43(13.4%)
TOTAL	1209/100.0%	580/100.0%	322/100.0%

North Dakota students listed "academic program" as a reason less often (36.8%) than either students from Minnesota (47.1%) or from other states (41.6%). Students from other states expressed "other" reasons 13.4% of the time as compared to 9.7% for those from North Dakota and 6.9% for those from Minnesota. Apparently the categories may not have encompassed the reasons for selecting UND as adequately for students from other states as it did for those from this area.

New Freshmen vs College Transfer

Comparing new freshmen to transfer students revealed some distinctive results.

TABLE 4

Reasons Given For Selecting UND By Student Status

	STUDENT STATUS	
Reasons	New Freshmen	College Transfer
Location	369(29.6%)	171(19.5%)
Academic Program	430(34.5%)	422(48.1%)
Reputation	205(16.5%)	114(13.0%)
Advice	107(8.6%)	55(6.2%)
Size	8(0.6%)	12(1.3%)
Financial Considerations	15(1.2%)	14(1.6%)
Other Unclassified	111(8.9%)	91(10.4%)
TOTAL	1245(99.9%)	876(100.1%)

While 48.2% of those transferring to UND gave "academic program" as their reason for selection, only 34.5% of the new freshmen did so. This finding seems reasonable since one would expect students who have been enrolled in college to have clearer educational goals than those who haven't. Many transfer students also change colleges because of perceived inadequacies in the program at the school they were attending or simply because that school did not offer the program they wished to major in. Another difference was noted regarding "location." New freshmen stated this 29.6% of the time, while only 19.5% of the transfer students did so. Since transfer students would be expected to be older than new freshmen, this finding could well be an artifact of the age differences already discussed.

Transfer Students By State

In looking for variations between transfer students (based on the state they transferred from), only minor differences were evident. "Location" was stated slightly more often (23.3%) by students from other states, than by either North Dakota (17.1%) or Minnesota (19.6%) students. "Other" reasons were also stated more often by students from North Dakota (13.3%) and other states (12.3%), than by Minnesota (4.8%) students. No apparent explanation seems to account for these differences, however.

Lapse Of Six Months Before Attending College

Another variable which may be tied to the age differences was whether or not six months had elapsed since the student had attended school. One would expect students who had delayed their enrollment in college to be older than new freshmen. For those in this situation, "location" was given much more often (36.1% vs 22.9%), while "academic programs" was given less often (32.4% vs 42.0%).

Handicap

Although handicapped students comprised only 1.4% of the sample, the analysis revealed two distinctive differences. First, 25.9% of the handicapped students stated "academic program" as a reason compared to 40.4% of the non-handicapped students. Second, "other" reasons were stated 33.3% of the time by handicapped students, compared to only 9.2% of those non handicapped. Thus, it appears other factors are much more important for handicapped students in their selection of a college, and that these take precedence over other considerations. The location of the rehabilitation hospital in Grand Forks, the handicapped services component of the Student Opportunity Program, and the relative accessibility

of UND's campus compared to other regional institutions could account for a number of these "other" reasons.

Veteran Status

The last variable to be considered, veteran status, also revealed findings consistent with age differences. This also would result from the expected finding that veterans are, as a group, older than non-veterans. Comparing veterans to non-veterans "location" and "other" were indicated more often (30.4% vs. 25.0% and 16.3% vs. 9.2%) while "academic program" was indicated less often (31.5% vs. 41.0%). Thus these differences may represent age differences between the two groups rather than true differences between veterans and non-veterans.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was designed to provide information about students' reasons for applying for admission to the University of North Dakota for the academic year 1979-80. This information becomes more important when viewed in the context of the projected decline in the number of traditional college age students during the coming decades. With the knowledge of why students' choose to attend a particular institution, college representatives and recruiters can insure that prospective students receive the kinds of information important to them in their decisions about college enrollment.

The results revealed that students cited reasons related to "academic program" 40.2% of the time, followed by "location" (25.5%), and "school's reputation" (13.0%). As a whole, these three factors accounted for 80.5% of the reasons cited by students responding to the question--"Why did you select the University of North Dakota?" on their Application For Admission form.

Further analysis of the data revealed that age appeared to account for most of the differences. Students 25 years or older were more likely to give "location" as a reason than were students 19 and younger, and 20-24. These groups generally stated a reason related to an academic program.

Another finding was that handicapped students were more likely to respond with a reason of "other" than were any other group of students. This may have resulted from the unique requirements an institution must meet for handicapped students before a decision to enroll is made.

Relatively minor differences were noted among students' reasons based on sex, state in which they had attended high school, or the state from which they transferred, if a transfer student.

Variations in stated reasons were evident, though, between new freshmen and transfer students, military veterans and non veterans, and between students maintaining continuous enrollment and those who had last attended school more than six months ago. However, since each of these variables consisted of categories which reflected age differences between groups, the findings were probably more symptomatic of the age differential than of true differences between groups.

Marked differences were evident in comparing the findings of our study to those of the American Council on Education. "Academic reputation" was indicated as being "very important" by 51.8% of the freshmen and 54.5% of the transfer students according to the ACE data. (See Appendix A). This was followed by "special education program," indicated 29.2% and 27.8% of the time. Our results (collapsed into the same categories for comparison) revealed that only 16.5% of the freshmen and 13.0% of the transfer students stated a reason related to "reputation," while "academic program" was indicated 34.5% and 48.1% of the time.

TABLE 5

Comparison Of ACE Survey And Open-ended Categorization Of Reasons Given For Attending UND By New Freshmen And College Transfer Students

REASON	ACE SURVEY		OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE	
	New Freshmen	College Transfer	New Freshmen	College Transfer
Location	6.5%	13.2%	29.6%	19.5%
Academic Program	29.2%	27.8%	34.5%	48.1%
Reputation	51.8%	54.5%	16.5%	13.0%
Advice	31.6%	18.9%	8.6%	6.2%
Size	-----	-----	0.6%	1.3%
Financial Reasons	22.2%	21.3%	1.2%	1.6%

Similar discrepancies were noted between the other categories with differences ranging from 6.3% to 23.1%. While the authors had not expected identical results because of the differences in the wording of the question and the manner in which the students responded, we had expected that by rank ordering the results there would have been greater correspondence between the two. Such was not the case.

In conclusion, the answers to the question "Why do students decide to attend the University of North Dakota?" differ depending on how it is asked and whom is asked. Though the results of our study indicated that "academic program" was the single most important factor influencing that decision, these results contradicted those of the previous ACE survey. Further study would be necessary to resolve the issue.

APPENDIX A

1979 American Council On Education (ACE)
Reasons Noted As Very Important In Selecting This College By
UND New Freshmen* And Transfer Students**

Reasons	New Freshmen	College Transfer
Relatives wanted me to come here	2.4%	0.0%
Teacher advised me	3.1%	1.9%
Has a good academic reputation	51.8%	54.5%
Offered financial assistance	11.7%	11.5%
Not accepted anywhere else	0.1%	0.0%
Advice of someone who attended	13.8%	11.3%
Offers special education programs	29.2%	27.8%
Has low tuition	10.5%	9.8%
Advice of guidance counselor	5.2%	1.9%
Wanted to live at home	6.5%	13.2%
Friend suggested attending	5.1%	3.8%
College representative recruited me	2.0%	0.0%

* A total of 1,029 New Freshmen completed the ACE survey.
** A total of 54 Transfer Students completed the ACE survey.

1979 American Council On Education (ACE)
Reasons Noted As Very Important In Selecting This College By
New Freshmen And Transfer Students Collapsed Into Corresponding Categories

Reasons	New Freshmen	College Transfer
Location	6.5%	13.2%
Academic Program	29.2%	27.8%
Reputation	51.8%	54.5%
Advice	31.6%	18.9%
Size (no corresponding category)	-----	-----
Financial Reason	22.2%	21.3%

APPENDIX B

The University of North Dakota

OFFICE OF ADMISSIONS

Grand Forks, North Dakota 58202

All applicants should return the application, matriculation data sheet and $15 in payment of the non-refundable application fee to the Office of Admissions, University of North Dakota. Sudents should see that an official transcript of their record at each other institution attended is sent directly from the principal or registrar of that school to the Office of Admissions, University of North Dakota. Applicants who have attended institutions of higher learning but have not earned 24 semester hours of credit should also request that their high school record be forwarded to the Office of Admissions. Consideration will not be given to an application until all transcripts are on file in the Admissions Office. Veterans who have earned college credits through USAFI or Military Training Programs should have official certification of this work sent to the Office of Admissions.

PLEASE LIST UNITED STATES SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER _____. **APPLICATION CANNOT BE PROCESSED WITHOUT THIS INFORMATION.**

Full legal name _____
Last (Family) First Middle

When do you plan to enter UND? 1979 (year) ☐ Fall Semester 2336/96.0% ☐ Spring Semester 58/2.4% ☐ Summer Session 12/0.5% Missing 27/1.1%

Permanent Address _____ Telephone _____
(Where mail will always reach you) Street City County State Zip

Present Address _____ Telephone _____
(To which notice of acceptance is to be sent) Street City County State Zip

Date of birth Median age - 19 _____ Sex ☐ M ☐ F M-1264/51.9% F-1167/47.9 Missing - 3/0.1
Month Day Year Place

Are you a veteran ☐ Yes ☐ No Y- 108/4.4 N-2241/92.1 Missing- 85/3.5

Are you a United States citizen? ☐ Yes ☐ No If not, name country _____

If foreign born, how long have you lived in U.S.? _____

Please check the appropriate school or college you wish to enter and your major field of study.

- ☐ Arts and Sciences
- ☐ Center for Teaching and Learning
- ☐ Engineering & Mines
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Nursing
- ☐ Business and Public Administration
- ☐ University College
- ☐ Medicine
- ☐ Fine Arts
- ☐ College of Human Resources Development

Major: _____ Do you desire teacher certification? ☐ Yes ☐ No

High School Attended	City	State	Date of Graduation
North Dakota - 1407/57.8%			
Minnesota - 640/26.3			
Other - 374/15.4		Missing - 13/0.5%	

College or University Attended	Dates Attended	Date of Graduation	Degree Earned
Transfer: North Dakota - 432/17.7%			
Minnesota - 298/12.2			
Other - 268/11.0			
New Freshmen: 1436/59.1			

"Name all colleges and universities attended. Failure to do so may result in dismissal."

Are you in attendance at a college at the present time? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If more than six months have elapsed since your attendance at an educational institution indicate briefly how your time has been spent Six months lapse: Y - 453/18.6% N - 1981/81.4

Have you had extended medical or psychiatric care in the past two years? _____. If yes, explain: _____

Have you any physical handicaps? Y - 34/1.4% N - 2400/98.6 What are they? _____

Have you previously attended the University of North Dakota? _____

Have you previously applied for admission to the University of North Dakota? _____ Have you previously paid admission fee? _____ Have you taken the American College Test ☐ Yes ☐ No

Why did you select the University of North Dakota? (see Appendix C & D)

I certify that all statements in this application are complete and true.

_____ _____
date Applicant's signature

APPENDIX C

Expanded Categories Of Reasons For Selecting UND Given By New Freshmen And College Transfer Students With The Collapsed Categories Indicated

Reason	N	Relative Frequency	Adjusted Frequency
Location:			
In-State	238	9.8%	11.2%
Close To Home	301	12.4%	14.2%
Far From Home	1	0.0%	0.0%
Academic Program:	852	35.0%	40.2%
Reputation:			
General	142	5.8%	6.7%
Academic	140	5.8%	6.6%
Extra-Curricular	4	0.2%	0.2%
Athletics	27	1.1%	1.3%
Advice:			
Friends	42	1.7%	2.0%
Parents/Relatives	85	3.5%	4.0%
Teacher/Professor	18	0.7%	0.8%
Counselor/Principal	17	0.7%	0.8%
College Representative	3	0.1%	0.1%
Size:			
General	11	0.5%	0.5%
Large	3	0.1%	0.1%
Small	6	0.2%	0.3%
Financial Reason:			
Financial Assistance Offered	7	0.3%	0.3%
Cost Of Attending	22	0.9%	1.0%
Other (Not Classifiable)	202	8.3%	9.5%
No Reason Stated:	313	12.9%	-----
TOTAL	2434	100.00%	100.00%

APPENDIX D

Representative Sample Of "Other" Responses To The Question:
"Why Did You Select The University Of North Dakota?"

--I am interested in moving away from the eastern USA and the University of North Dakota offers me a good education in a beautiful state.
--I satisfy the residency requirement.
--I can take classes while I work.
--Because after I finish my two years, I will have a better opportunity to become a Flight Attendant.
--Because it has what I want.
--I have carefully read the requirements and the reputation of UND and have decided that it is the best place for me to obtain an education in Aviation.
--Specifically 3 very pertinent reasons: 1) Army ROTC, 2) Excellent Law School, and 3) Excellent Varsity Hockey Program.
--To get a degree in Occupational Therapy.
--I heard it was a good school.
--It has excellent credentials and is close to home.
--Previously my sister attended UND; eventually I became interested from visits to the campus.
--Nice college; brother graduating 1979.
--Husband stationed at the GFAFB.
--I'm getting married; my husband attends there.
--Need a change; boyfriend accepted into your Law School.
--Wife from North Dakota is getting homesick.
--I was more impressed with this school than any other.
--I visited the campus and liked it.
--I love the campus, the location, the people.
--I attended Girls State here and liked the college.
--Friendly atmosphere and a broad academic reputation.
--Because all the other colleges I applied to have rejected me and most other college last-application-date have already passed.
--Equipped with wheelchair student program.
--UND offers a lot and I feel it can help me get a good start.
--I have decided that it was my best choice.
--So I can increase my education.
--I have studied my choices for a college and found UND of Grand Forks to well fit my needs and wishes for a college.
--Seems to offer what I want.
--I don't know; mainly curriculum.
--For the numerous handicap facilities.
--Scandinavian.
--Since I'm trying to re-establish myself in college, I've found UND to fit my needs.
--Multiple reasons.
--North Dakota/South Dakota reciprocity in PT.
--To continue education and be close to Rehab Hospital.
--Extensive facilities.
--Because I think the Lord wants me there.
--I had little choice.
--College of my choice.

REFERENCES

Cooperative Institutional Research Program conducted jointly by the American Council on Education and the University of California, Los Angeles: Summary Data on UND Entering Freshmen and Transfer Students for Fall (1979).